133 AT 3

A PRIZE FIGHT AND A PRIZE GIRL.

By Gerald Beaumont.

THE air in the Manhattan Athletic Club was heavy with tobacco, and the hum of voices indicated a capacity house. Between the second and third preliminaries the referee walked to the center of the ring and held up one hand appealingly.

"Gen—le-men!" he cried.

Gradually the noise faded.

"The Harlem Kid," he shrilled, "you all know him; he's in bad shape. His friends want to send him to a dry climate. Those who want to help the Kid out can throw their spare change into the ring or give it to the ushers who will pass among you."

He leaned over the ropes and borrowed a derby. Placing the hat in the center of the padded canvas, he tossed into it a silver coin, and walking to the ropes, leaned there expectantly.

Dimes and quarters pattered into the ring, then heavier coins and finally little wads of bills weighted with silver.

Alderman Conners, seated at the ringside, turned to a friend.

"A good boy," he commented, a mighty good boy, do you mind? The bunch took him up to Albany when they were lobbying for the Frawley bill. They tabbd him 'Exhibit A,' and just on his appearance he made more votes than any of them. A clean-living, clean-looking kid, and I figured him a comer."

"What's he got, the con?"

"I suppose so; that's what comes from trying to keep within the lightweight limit. It got Joe Bilt and a lot of others. Can you change a twenty?"

The alderman accepted two tendollar bills, handed one up through the ropes, and then a moment later rumpled up its companion and tossed it in.

"I guess the Kid needs it more than I do," he explained to his friend.

Just before the main event the referee announced that the contributions totaled $612.70, and that the Harlem Kid would thank 'em in person.

Boosted up by Abdul the Turk, a sandy-haired, hazel-eyed youngster sawled through the ropes and stood erect, his eyes too brilliant, his cheek-bones too prominent, his voice too low to be heard past the fifth row.

The referee came to the rescue.

"The Kid thanks you one and all," he shouted, "and he says that some day he hopes to come back and entertain you again."

The Kid nodded corroboration, waved both hands at the darkened bleachers, and then, because he was only twenty years oud and the ring was his world, he sat down on the lower rope and cried.

It was Abdul the Turk who lifted the Kid out of the ring—Abdul the champion wrestler of the East Side. The huge Mohammedan carried the Harlem Kid to the seclusion of a dressing room and there kidded him into composure.

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NORTHWEST from Deming, N. M., the railroad crosses the Mimbres valley and heads for the Geronimo mountains.

Where the steel rails end, 6,000 feet above the sea's surface, is a region rich in silver, copper, turquoise mines and ancient Spanish lore. But more precious than all these is the dry, aseptic air that blows across balsamic desert growth.

It was to Silver City that they sent the Harlem Kid.

Dr. Anton Wismer, examining physician at the San Rosario Sanitarium, catalogued Richard Walter Potter's antecedents, history and characteristics on the four-page form. The examination lasted one hour, and at its conclusion Wismer asked but one more question:

"Homesick?"

"Oh, my God!" said the Harlem Kid. "Oh, my God!"

It was in the morning, and they were all bundled up in steamer chairs strung out along the sun porch, the patients alternated by sex as an incentive to sociability. The Harlem Kid accepted meekly his morning ration of fresh egg and then leaned back a little, later with a thermometer projecting rakishly from his lips. The chair at his left giggled. Potter scowled in the direction of the giggle and found himself contemplating a girl of about his own age with goldbrown eyes that laughed at him mischievously from a perky oval face. In contrast to the ivory of her skin, chestnut hair rippled back in an effective frame.

Potter's scowl relaxed. The girl laughed.

"Never mind, Harlem," she consoled. "You'll get over it, but you'll never look the same. Wait until they get you playing croquet!"

The Kid's eyes widened. "Where do you get that Harlem stuff?" he demanded.

She looked away a moment, then his way again.

"Wismer told me all about you. Ever go into Rainey's on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth, just off the Square?"

"Ask me did I ever pull on a glove!" protested Potter. "Why, say—what do yon know about Rainey's?"

"I worked there," she answered.

Slim arms stole from the blankets and swayed rhythmically as she hummed a popular refrain. Something in the turn of her head and the witchery of her smile electrified the Harlem Kid. He sat bolt upright and swung his legs to the floor.

"I've seen you there!" he wheezed. "I've heard you sing that! I live only two blocks away! Oh, baby, shake!"

When the Harlem Kid retired that night he lay awake for some time wondering how much money it would take to buy a cattle ranch. He had already decided to get well and marry Jackie Pryor. Such is youth

He told her of his plans the next day, and Jackie, tilting back her head and strumming on an imaginary guitar, sang:

"I love the nerve of Georges,
But he ought to remain in France,
For oh, ma, oo, la, la! He's taking an awful chance."

Then she waved to a nurse. "The Marquis of Queensberry is delirious," asserted Jackie. "You'd better take his temperature."

The Harlem Kid waxed indignant. "Go on away! I never felt better in my life. I could step twenty! I could—step—"

He made a valiant effort, failed and fell back disconsolate.

When the nurse had gone, the girl plucked at Potter's sleeve.

"Don't weaken, Harlem," she whispered. "We keep each other alive up here just by kidding; it's part of the treatment. You're the seventh man that's proposed, and—and——"

"Never mind apologizing," groaned the kid. "I'm down for the count."

"Well, you better get right up," she admonished. "I was only going to say that seven is my lucky number, and as for a cattle ranch, that's my idea of heaven. So there!"

As the weeks unfolded and he gained in strength, Potter was enrolled in the cast of the San Rosario All-Star Theatrical Company, which presented nightly in the big recreation room the original version of that gladsome comedy, "Carry On."

From Cecil Bigbee, a British aviator who wore an extraordinary variety of absurd caps, an equally absurd mustache and cane, and a decoration on his flying colors which belied all the absurdity, the Harlem Kid learned the gentle art of entertaining others at his own expense. Just as Bigbee affected an exaggerated drawl and accent, and Max Epstein, millionaire tobaccoonist, secretly practised a dialect to live up to expectations, so the Harlem Kid imitated the mannerisms and vocabulary of Louie the Fish and Abdul the Turk and sundry others who fulfilled, in a measure, the popular conception of prize-fighters.

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UNDER the circumstances it was to be expected that the Harlem Kid and Cliff Rainey's star show-girl should fall in love. They were both from the Big Town; both were young, and both had known the favor of the public.

It was Jackie who pointed out still another thing in common.

"You needn't think you were the only one who didn't dare eat a square meal, Harlem. A girl who can't make a hundred and twenty-six ringside gets no job at Rainey's or any other place. Nobody likes their flappers fat!"

Potter frowned. "If I catch anybody calling you a flapper, I'll knock their block off," he promised. "You ought to scale one hundred and thirty-three. I'm tilting the bar at a hundred and forty now, and Doc says I'll do better than that when I get down from this altitude. Goodbye lightweight title!" He sighed comfortably. "Us for the cow-ranch, eh, Kiddo?"

Jackie smiled and said nothing. . . . The quiet summer slipped away.

The awakening was brutally sudden. Potter discovered that he had an even hundred dollars left to his credit, that an exceedingly modest cattle ranch would cost him about thirty thousand dollars and that she was going back to her job at Rainey's under weight, because she was broke, also, which was a rather large discovery to make all in one day. He hunted up Wismer and demanded the truth about the girl. The physician was unprofessionally frank.

"The cafe life in New York will kill her. She needs another year at San Rosario, and if I owned the place or had the money, I'd stake her to it. She ought to stay in this climate forever."

"And me?" asked the Kid.

"Take care of yourself, and you're all right. But I wouldn't fight any more."

The Harlem Kid thanked him mechanically.

"Doc," he said. "I want you to transfer that hundred to the account of Mrs. Potter, and there'll be more coming right along."

"Mrs. Potter?"

"Yes, I'm going to marry Jackie in the morning and leave on the afternoon train. She stays here until she's cured—understand? I'll guarantee the bill."

The Kid was fully aware that all depended, finally, on the manner in which he made his appeal to Jackie.

Between the time he left Wismer and located the object of his search in the summer-house, Potter had time to invent a wealthy uncle in California, an equally fictitious monthly allowance and a mysterious job as a traveling salesman.

Jackie was nineteen, exceedingly lonely and very much in love. She stood out for an hour against the Kid's eloquence and then lost the decision on points. The lunch-bell rang, and they did not answer the summons. Bigbee was delegated to conduct the search.

Potter had just pointed out that with a cattle ranch "everything would be jake," when Bigbee blundered in with a "'Ello, 'ello—I say, what's up?" He paused, astonished, and then turned to bolt, but the future Mrs. Potter seized this coattails.

"It's all right, old dear," she cried. "We want you to be the best man; don't we, Dick? And you'll have to go on making love to me afterward, because Harlem's going away and I'm—I'm not!"

"Yes, you are," contradicted the Kid, "just as soon as I can get a stake."

"Oh, I say!" Bigbee protested. "You don't mean it! Really? Eh, what? Oh, lively½ Lovely!"

So they were married in the morning on the sun-porch, with the Reverend Peter Standridge, a new arrival, officiating.

It was Max Epstein who, suspecting the true state of affairs, carried his suspicions and a thousand-dollar check to Dr. Wismer.

"My dear young Christian friend," said the cigar dealer, "suppose it we cut the rates for the little Mrs. Box-Fighter?"

After all the good-byes had been said, Potter bumped away down the mountain road accompanied by Cecil Bigbee. Just before train time, the Englishman turned to his friend rather wistfully.

"I say, you're a lucky beggar, you know—having an uncle and all that sort of thing, eh?"

"Uncle, hell!" exclaimed the Kid. "The only relative I've got is right back there on the hill. Listen Biggy: you're a good sport, and I want you to look out for her. Jolly her along if she gets blue, and for the love of Mike, keep the sporting pages away from her."

The Englishman's blue eyes lighted. "Cheerio, lad," he called as the train moved out. "If I don't see you again, I'm damned glad to have met you, eh?"

Leaning out of the car window, Potter fancied that Bigbee leaned a little heavier than usual on his cane, and that the skin over his cheekbones appeared almost transparent. Gripping his own palms, he signaled a parting clasp to the man on the platform. Bigbee smiled and touched his visor. The Harlem Kid always remembered that salute.

Arriving in Deming, it took Potter only twenty-four hours to learn that most of New Mexico was worrying along without the aid of either fight promoters or sporting editors. In desperation he telegraphed the matchmaker of a club at Vernon, Los Angeles, offering his services in exchange for transportation. And although Harry McCarl needed new talent badly and had heard of the Harlem Kid, the return message read:

Nothing doing advance. Hundred and refund ticket if you win.

Potter covered the 728 miles to California in three days by serving as a valet to a cattle shipment. Hustling out to the Vernon pavilion, he discovered—which he hadn't known—that it was Friday night and the regular weekly card was in order. He managed to locate McCarl just in time. The matchmaker was making a frantic eleventh-hour search for a substitute to go on with Knockout Dailey in the semi-windup.

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McCARL regarded the Kid dubiously. "You're too light; Dailey's got in on you by fifteen pounds."

"Never mind," Potter responded. "I've been living on doughnuts for three days. Stake me to a meal around the corner and I'll come back and show you something."

But when he climbed into the ring, an hour later, in borrowed tights and shoes, he experienced a curious sense of distaste for his surroundings.

He might have lost the fight right there had not a big man at the ringside suddenly climbed into his corner with a yell and encircled him with an affectionate hug. It was Abdul the Turk, wild with delight and looking like a million dollars. The giant ripped off his coat and collar and rolled up his sleeves.

"I take you, Keed!" he shouted. "Look out, boys, he is all mine. What you say, Keed? Just like old times! We keel heem together, eh?"

The Harlem Kid brought in the bacon in the second round with the old "one-two" to the jaw. He went home with Abdul after signing up for three more fights at catchweights and a guarantee that assured a certain girl at least two more months at San Rosario.

Abdul and the Harlem Kid made a good pair. Abdul uncanonly dextrous as a trainer and faithful as a St. Bernard, Potter cool-headed, intelligent and a born fighter.

For a while they prospered amazingly. The mild climate, the absence of any demand that he reduce weight and the fact that California's four-round game was ideally suited to the Kid's style of battle, combined to develop both his strength and his value as a drawing card. Rather than descend to the lightweight class, he fought at 142 pounds or more and blithely claimed the welterweight championship of the Pacific coast. Though letter-writing was not one of his accomplishments, he managed after every battle to scrawl long messages on hotel stationery to San Rosario, and his efforts to account satisfactorily for the money orders were so ambiguous that Jackie became first suspicious, then alarmed, and was only quieted by Cecil Bigbee's assurance that he knew what her husband was doing and that "it was quite all right but a fearfully jolly secret!"

Nevertheless, Jackie deemed it wise to preach a little bit in her letters and to make up for it at the end by telling him how she was gaining in weight and how much she loved him. The Harlem Kid committed some sentences in particular to memory and meditated upon them in his corner while waiting for the bell to ring. It helped to steady his nerves.

When opponents became scarce in the south, they moved to San Francisco and scored more successes in that city and across the bay in Oakland. The Kid now began to get offers from Chicago and even from New York, where fifteen-round fights were now permitted, but the offers were conditioned on his making the light-weight limit, and he disdained replying.

Finally Pat Griffin, towing a couple of heavyweights, and in search of smaller timber, came out from New York, just in time to see the Kid outbox Denny Malloy, the Denver crack.

"If you can do one hundred and thirty-three pounds," said the Irishman, "I can land you a match with Joe Vesper."

In the last month Potter had become more and more aware of the fact that there was no big money to be made in the welter class, and it was big money that the Kid was after—now.

"I don't think I could make it, Pat," he said truthfully, "not unless I cut off a leg."

Griffin nodded. "I thought not, and it's too bad. Vesper can't make the weight either, any more, but he's champion, and you know what that means."

"Sure; he wont weigh in himself, but he makes the other guy get down to thirty-three, and that gives him a ten-pound advantage. I could have made one hundred and three-three a few months ago, but not now."

The Irishman raised inquiring eyebrows.

"I was in a hospital," explained the kid.

"Oh," commented Griffin, and waved a hand in dismissal of the subject.

Potter went back to his hotel and found a three-page letter from his wife, a letter that was different from her usual cheery epistles. At the bottom was a postscript:

"Dear old Biggy passed out during the night, and oh, Dick, I'm terribly scared. Can't we take up some government land right away? I've saved some of the money you sent—enough maybe to make a start. I'm dreaming horrid things about you, too, Dick—what does it all mean?"

The Harlem Kid routed Abdul out of bed that night, and standing in the middle of the latter's room, flung off his own night-clothes.

"Look me over, Ab," he commanded, "and tell me if I could get down to one hundred and thirty-three."

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THE Turk was wide awake on the instant. The question was a challenge to all his ability as a trainer and handier of human flesh. He circled the room barefooted, eyes studying the frame of his friend, noting particularly the thighs and waist line and hips, for it is from these portions of the body alone a fighter can spare the pound of flesh, never the legs nor the shoulders. Finally he sat down on the bed and swore disconsolately. There was no excess fat on Potter's body.

"What you weigh now, Keed?"

"Forty-two, I guess."

"Dam'! I take five pound off by sweat;! I dry out three more, but how I ake heem other pound?"

"That's for you to dope out. If Griffin can get the weight hour at three o'clock and the fight at ten, I'll sign."

He left Adbul still muttering: "Where I get heem the last pound?"

The next day the Harlem Kid held a long conference with Pat Griffin which ended in his telling the vetran manager the whole story. And it was on the advice of Griffin, who knew a lot about the temperament of fighters, that the Kid wrote to Jackie, and with a single exception, told her the truth. He said nothing about the weight, but told her that the title match would surely give them their needed stake, and that she could figure on the ranch right now.

"I ain't got any rich uncle, Sis," he concluded, "and I couldn't sell a glass of water in the desert. All I can do is fight, and I promise I won't do it any more if I can just make this one clean-up so we can grab that ranch. Now, don't you worry, Sis; and if you ain't mad, I wish you'd wire me."

Three days later he got this reply:

"Go get him, Kid; I love you more than ever."

The Harlem Kid never did find out that Pat Griffin, shrewdest manager in the business, had sent a two-hundred-word night-message to Mrs. Potter, pledging her husband's safety and promising to start with Kid to San Rosario the day after the match, no matter what the result.

No sooner had the articles been signed, calling for a fifteen-round bout, with the challenger weighing in at three in the afternoon, than Griffin turned the Harlem Kid over to Abdul the Turk.

"I've done my part," he said. "Now you do yours, and don't forget there's a ten-thousand-dollar forfeit up on his making the weight."

Where weight-reduction is the all-important consideration, the tragedy of the training period is reserved for final two weeks, and it is the last five days that constitute the pugilist's Gethsemane. There is a preliminary vacation, usually in the mountains, and this fortnight frolic is a delusion and a snare, designed solely to build up the body to the point where it can withstand the shock that is in store for it.

When the Harlem Kid came back from te Sierras and settled down to the grind of road-work at San Rafael, he knew what was expected of him, but the first time he donned the rubber undershirt and Abdul swathed waist and chest in the tight flannel bandages, his spirits sank—and Griffin resorted, ahead of time, to the old trick of adjusting the scales so that when they weighed in the last thing at night, Potter believed himself making better progress than he really was. Day by day the road-work in the hot sun lengthened, the weight and tightness of bandages and cloting was increased, the ration of water which his body craved was decreased, and his real weight dropped to one hundred and thirty-nine, then to one hundred and thirty-eight, and then a half-pound less. But on the tird day before the contest, after four hours on the road, and two more in the gymnasium with lunch omitted, he weighed exactly the same as the day before.

The body began to send its telegraphic protest to the brain, and the Kid laya awake at night, his mind throbbing to the rhythmic subconscious demand: "A hundred and thirty-three at three—a hundred and thirty-three at three."

Griffin consulted with Abdul the Turk.

"He can't stand any more sweating; dry him out. Nothing but a cup of coffee in the morning after this."

Potter held to the road work, and his salivary glands dried up completely.

The morning of the contest he took only strong coffee, and Abdul, sniffing like a child, rubbed off the final pound.

* * * *

AT exactly three o'clock in the afternoon the Harlem Kid, naked as the day he was born, stepped on the scales at the San Francisco Presidio and held his breath. The bar, set at one hundred and thirty-three pounds, trembled, lifted, settled back—and the Kid toppled off into the arms of Abdul the Turk. Pugilism's Shylock had his pound of flesh.

In the scant seven hours that was given them, Pat Grifin and the trainer threw all their skill and strategy into the task of rehabilitating Harlem. Within fifteen minutes after weighing in, they had him in a restaurant around the corner, where a heavy meal was already waiting him. He was permitted to eat and drink his fill, and then after a brief auto-ride they put him to bed in a hotel not half a block distant from the huge pavilion, and there he remained, sipping beef-tea at regular intervals.

This was Pat Griffin's cue to display the genius that had made his name synonymous with ring success. He locked the Kid's door and sat down by the bedside.

"Harlem," he began quietly, "you know me—I've never been behind the ring with a lot of fighters, shrewdest manager in the business, had sent a two-hundred-word night-message to Mrs. Potter, pledging her husband's safety and promising to start with Kid to San Rosario the day after the match, no matter what the result.

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"Harlem," he began quietly, "you know me—I've never been behind the wrong man in my life. You won the fight when you stepped on those scales, and I'll tell you why. You're going against the cleverest boxer in the business, and he's got all his plans laid to tire you out over fifteen rounds, knowing that you're weak at the weight, and all he has to do is to keep away and outbox you. But we know, Harlem, that it's going to be a four-round fight—the fastest four rounds that any lightweights ever traveled."

Potter raised his head from the pillow. "Four?"

"Four," confirmed the Irishman; maybe less. You're going to knock him out. Now, you listen: Vesper is part Mexican and part Indian, and that means he's a front-runner and he can't stand the gaff. This is what we're going to do."

His voice trailed off into a confidential mumble, and the Kid listened intently. An hour passed and then Griffin pulled his trump card. From an inside pocket he produced two railroad tickets and held them up for Potter's inspection.

"We leave at 9 o'clock in the morning for San Rosario," he said, "and I'm going to help you pick out that ranch. Take another swig of tea and go to sleep."

One hour before ring-time Griffin saw to it that the Kid was awakened and handed an inspired telegram that read:

"Remember, Dick, carry 8!
"Jackie."

The referee had concluded his instructions with an admonitory, "Shake hands as you come out," when the Harlem Kid spoke up:

"We'll shake hands now."

The champion grinned, extended his gloves in a sweeping movement and walked back to his corner. To the surprise of the great crowd, the challenger remained in the middle of the ring, eyes fixed intently on his opponent's corner. His gloves were drawn into position, his feet braced under him for a spring, and his head thrust slightly forward. In the curve of his slim body there was the sinister suggestion of a catapult that needed but the lightest touch of the trigger to accomplish its mission. More extraordinary still was the eagerness, manifested in every taut, quivering muscle and limb of the Pride of Harlem.

Quick protests broke from the opposite corner. The referee hastened forward. "What's the idea?"

Potter's eyes remained riveted on his opponent; his soft shoes squirmed into the canvas; his crouching body tensed still more.

"Ring the bell," he snapped. "I don't have to go to my corner and you know it."

The referee hesitated and was lost. He backed away, and signaled to the timekeeper. The bang of the bell and Potter's spring were almost simultaneous.

The Harlem Kid remembered the stroke of the gong, remembered clearly the leap that carried him into his opponent's corner, and the sting of the first blow that he drove home against the champion's heart, but after that his body was a machine automatically responding to subconscious suggestion. He himself was back at San Rosario under the turquoise skies, listening to the prattle of a girl.

The four-round game teaches a man speed, speed—and still more speed. The drying-out process takes the last bit of logginess from the system. The Harlem Kid was naturally an aggressive, two-handed fighter of the hurricane type. And now, under Griffin's instructions, he had become a fistic cyclone that from the tap of the gong carried the battle to the man in the other corner.

In the heavier, tawny frame of Jose Vesperandes, known to the world as Joe Vesper, the blood of the Pimans flowed. For two minutes he covered up and waited for the storm to subside, but as the tumult from floor and galleries increased and the challenger's gloves ripped at his ribs and head with increasing speed, his control crumpled.

Ignoring the advice of his seconds, he abandoned footwork and science and elected to mix with the man who had dared to show him up.

The bell clanged repeatedly, signaling the end of the round, and still the Harlem Kid and the king of the lightweights stood toe to toe in a thunder of gloves until they were pried apart.

That, too, was part of Griffin's plan, for it brought Joe Vesper up for the second round with his nostrils wide and the light of anger in his small black eyes.

Again the Harlem Kid leaped to the attack, and the telegraph instruments beat a staccato chorus as the ringside experts strove vainly to follow the most amazing pace they had ever seen in a title match. Only one man, a veteran scribe for the biggest news service of the country, grasped the significance of the round.

"Potter is fighting against time," he dictated. "It looks like a knock-out in the next, or a decision for the champ.

* * * *

PAT Griffin knew the truth when the Harlem Kid sank into his corner after rocking his opponent again and again until the roar of the hunting pack rang full and clear against the rafters. He cast one glance down at Abdul, working furiously on the boy's quivering legs, and another at Joe Vesper, his head tilted back on the ropes, his eyes closed, and his chest heaving spasmodically. Then for the first time in his life the Irishman seized a sponge and prepared to toss the token of defeat into the ring. He knew that Potter would not last out the round—and there was the girl at San Rosario.

Abdul, the Turk, looking up, guessed the meaning of the sponge. He grabbed it from Griffin's hand and squeezed it against the Kid's bleeding lips.

"You got heem, Keed," he coached. "She's las' round now. What your girl say if you don' win?"

And in that final question from his trainer the Harlem Kid found strength enough to fling himself into the third round with undiminished aggressiveness. His body registering its protests continually, was still obedient to his stronger will, when the end came. He had pulled himself free of a clinch and was starting a left for the head, when the champion beat him to it. The blow caught him above the ear; and off balance, he dropped to the floor. In a flash he was up, with all his remaining strength concentrated in a wild right swing.

The human mind acts quickly under the stress of danger, but the muscles do not always obey. Potter saw the glove of the champion stab out in a right cross and knew that his own blow was too late to beat it. His brain telegraphed an appeal to the left hand for protection, but the hand was paralized. At the instant his outflung fist crashed against its objective, every nerve in his body relaxed under one blow that jarred him into insensibility. He pitched backward, and his last flash of consciousness burned into his brain the realization that he could not get to his feet in the ten seconds allotted him, but that he must try.

From Abdul the Turk broke a frenzied yell that split the lower-pitched crescendo.

"Mother of Allah!" he shrieked. "Who go down first?"

For the space of three stupefied seconds Pat Griffin remained glued to his place at the ring-post, his lips a-gape, his eyes looking across the fallen body of the Harlem Kid to the figure of Joe Vesper sprawled under the ropes of his own corner. One glance at the referee's startled face and his swinging arm, tolling the count of four, and the Irishman awoke to action. He fought his way around the edge of the platform to a spot in back of the referee and grabbed at the latter's ankles.

"Billy—Billy, suspend time! You can't count 'em both out—stop at nine—stop at nine!"

The frenzied message penetrated the pandemonium. The third man in the ring recognized in the advice the only possible solution to a problem new to the prize ring. His voice rang clear and true in the knock-out litany:

"Seven—eight—nine and——"

With one hand quivering in the air, he backed against the ropes, wide eyes set on the two supine figures palpitating on the canvas floor. The tenth second was officially suspended!

Back to the spot nearest the Harlem Kid plowed Pat Griffin, but Abdul the Turk was ahead of him, a howling Hercules wielding a water-soaked sponge and pounding like a maniac on the padded platform. Bedlam reigned in the corner of the champion.

Two seconds ticked by, and the slim figure of the Harlem Kid stirred and rolled over. The bronze body of Joe Vesper quivered, and his arms thrashed the floor. Somewhere deep in the brain cells of both was stirring the age-old conflict of the races.

Griffin was no anthropologist, but he knew the history of the ring.

"White skin against dark," he trumpeted. "Come on, Harlem!"

And Potter arose, not in triumph as befits a champion of the world but lurching drunkenly against the ropes and looking vainly for the other man.

The poised arm of the referee descended over the squirming figure of Joe Vesper.

"And out!" he cried. But no one heard him.

Abdul the Turk was through the ropes in time to catch the toppling form of the Harlem Kid.

They put him to bed in the little hotel room—Griffin, Abdul, Nosey Mundorff and others of the jubilant retinue. It was then that an awe-struck messenger boy came.

Griffin snatched at the blank. "Now, Champion," he chortled, "we'll shoot a wire to the missus. What'll it be?"

The Harlem Kid looked at the eager faces around him and sensed that they expected something snappy, something with a kick in it. He strove to rise to the occasion, but after a moment's pondering gave it up. He grinned sheepishly at the blue time-table on his bed and the tickets to Silver City.

"Aw, you frame it, Grif," he urged. "You know what she wants—tell her—just tell her everything's jake."

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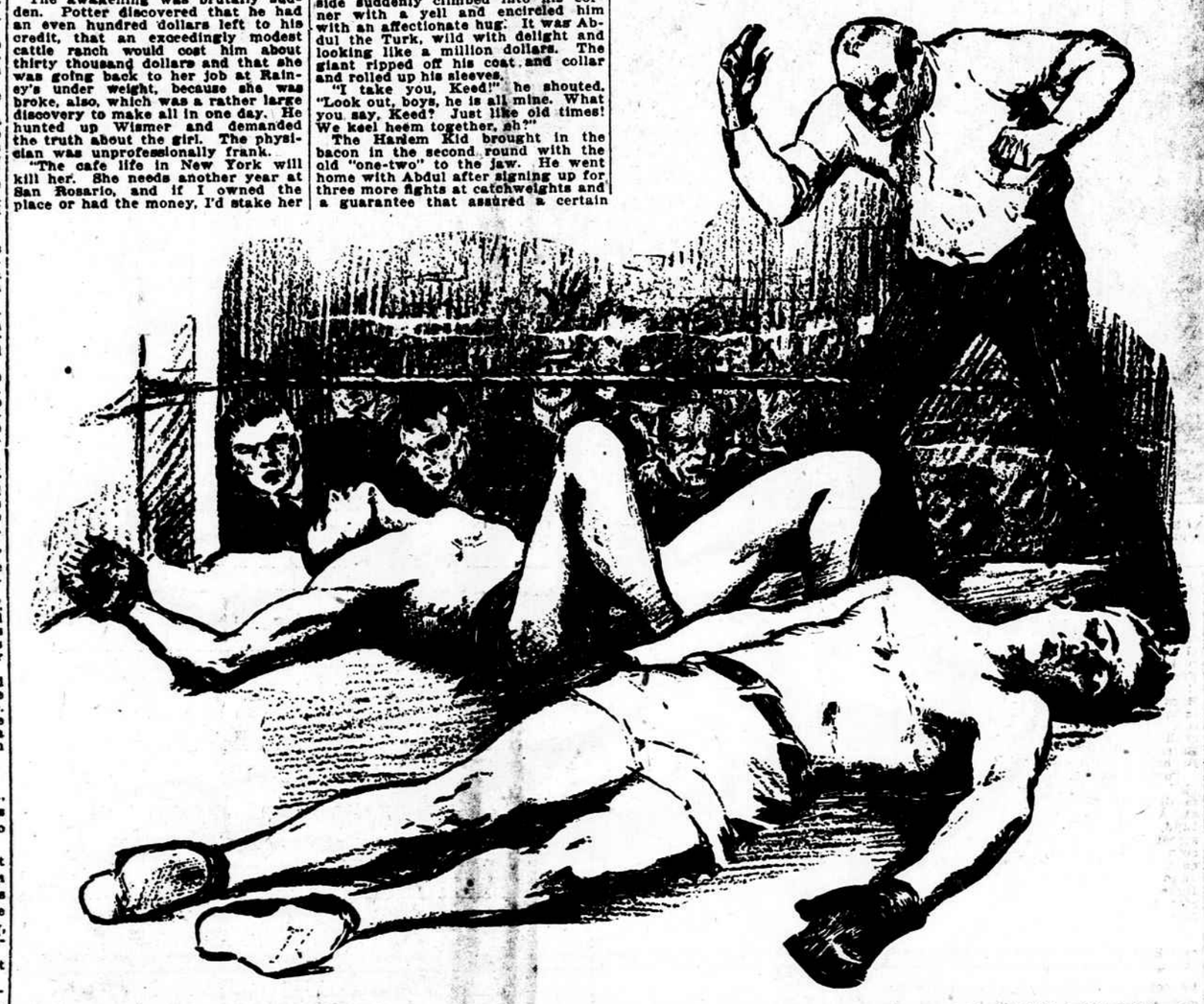

"WITH ONE HAND QUIVERING IN THE AIR, HE BACKED AGAINST THE ROPES, WIDE EYES SET ON THE TWO SUPINE FIGURES."

Value of Sundial.

IN many a rich man's garden a sundial tells the time, though nobody looks or listens. It is probable that the sundial never gave any information that could not have been obtained more quickly in other ways. The sundial fulfills a function in a man's garden, but that function is not to tell the time. It is often of no beauty and always of no utility, but there is a cult in old things or in new things that are fashioned after old things, and a man likes t oset up a sundial on his lawn as he will set up old armor in his hall.

No word should be spoken against old things just because they are old. For in excellence and elegance many old things surpass the newest things, and that a thing survives the years is in a way testimony of its worth, though also in a way it may be testimony of its worthlessness. There is sometimes a flavor about old things which new things lack, sort of an odor of boxwood and lavender instead of varnish, fresh paint and wet plaster. Sometimes the odor of old things is musty and more suggestive of moths, worms and decay than of boxwood and lavender.

The sundial is nothing like so efficient as a watch. It never was very much of an aid to man as a time indicator. It never professed to do more than tell the time of day, because it could not tell the time of night, and on old sundials, as well as on many new ones, is this sentence, often in Latin: "I mark none but sunny hours." So that on foggy days, or on days of gloom and cloudy skies, the "gnomon," which is that triangular piece whose shadow points out the time on the dial, casts no shadow.

The sundial became a popular garden ornament in the sunny parts of Europe in the fifteenth century. There were older time recorders. There were hour glasses, candles that marked the time by their burning, lamps that indicated the hours by the amount of oil consumed, and the water clock, which was the most reliable of all these time-recording devices. When the sundials came into vogue they were bought by rich men who could well afford to have a clock, the cost of which was less than the cost of an ornamental sundial. The peasant who could not afford a clock did not need a sundial, because he could tell time, or nearly tell the time, by looking at the sun or by the slant of his own shadow.

The south of Europe fashion of the sundial spread to England with the fashion of the formal or Italian garden, and when English, Irish and Scotch gentry fled to the colonies, or simply emigrated to the colonies, they took with them the idea that a garden was not a garden without a sundial, any more than it could be a garden without a box hedge, a border of jonquils, some arbor vitae trees, a gravel walk and a rustic bench.

In the older settlement portions of Maryland and Virginia and including the District of Columbia it is not unusual to find these sundials, or the "stump" or base on which the dial rested, in the gardens of old homes. Yet it is a fair assumption that on every place where there was a sundial a clock run by wheels and weights ticked away in the manor house, or in the mansion house, and that every land owner who could afford to have a sundial in his garden carried a gold watch or silver watch in the fob pocket of his "small clothes."

"Hard Days for Base Ball Catchers," Says Ring Lardner

TO the editor: I got a letter the other day asking why didn't I write about baseball no more as I usen't to write about nothing else, you might say. Well friends, I may as well admit that I have kind of lose interest in the old game, or rather it ain't the old game which I have lose interest in it, but it is the game which the magnates has fixed up to please the public with their usual good judgment.

A cople yrs. ago a ball player named Baby Ruth that was a pitcher by birth was made into an outfielder on acct. of how he could bust them and he begin breaking records for long distants hits and etc. and he become a big drawing card and the master minds that controls baseball says to themselfs that if it is home runs that the public wants to see, why leave us give them home runs, so they fixed up a ball that if you don't miss it entirely it will clear the fence and the result is that ball players which use to specialize in hump back liners to the pitcher is now amongst our leading sluggers when by rights they couldn't take a ball in their hands and knock it past the base umpire.

Another result is that I stay home and read a book.

But statistics shows that about 7 people out of every 100 is ½ cuckoo so they's still some that is still interested in the national pastime so for their benefit I will write a little about it as long as I don't half to set through a game of it to get the material.

* * * *

WELL, I was in a certain town a little wile ago and run acrost a friend of mine that is a big league ball player which I won't say which club he is on, but he made the remark that now days when his club comes to the Polo Grounds in N. Y. he don't never see me setting in the press coop no more, and I says I was working pretty hard and he says:

"You would be surprised the number of people that is too busy to come and watch us play ball."

So I said it wasn't only his club that I didn't have no time for but it was all the clubs and I couldn't get steamed up over them no more and maybe it was because I was getting old.

"Well," he says, "they's a lot of others getting old, too, and if they keep on ageing like they have so far this season, why pretty soon we will be haveing secret practice at 3:30 p.m."

Well, I finely got up nerve to ask him where his club stood in the race.

"We are a good eighth," he says, "and we are proud of it. A club that is out in front in this race hasn't got nothing to brag about as you can't see how they can help it. But when you look at the 8 clubs in this league, you will half to own up that it takes genius to be worse than the other 7, and believe me we got genius."

"Listen," he says, "why don't you come out and set on our bench some day and get an education? They's 2 of the new boys that was overseas together in the war and after they got back to America they didn't see each other till this spring when they both joined our club. So one of them asked the other where he played last season and he says he didn't play only a couple months. He says he was laid up with a long sledge of sickness.

"Then one day one of the boys was talking about a pitcher on another club and we hadn't seen this pitcher yet, but this boy had been in the same league with him last season. So we asked this boy what this here pitcher had and he says he has got a great curve ball that ain't fast or it ain't slow, its just mediokum."

* * * *

"LISTEN," says my friend, "they use to say that Connie Mack had intricate signs that it took smart ball players to learn them. Well, you ought to try and learn the signs we are useing. For inst, say the other club has got men on second and third base and it's a close game and their best hitter is up and we don't want to take a chance on him.

"Well, Bill sets there on the bench and yells at the pitcher and finely the pitcher looks and Bill holds up four fingers. This means he wants the pitcher to give the man four balls. Then Bill points to first base. That is to show the pitcher that it is first base and not third base that he wants the man passed to. Then the pitcher is as libel as not to stick one right in the groove and the star batter knocks it cockeyed and we lose the ball game and Bill asks the pitcher what was the matter and the pitcher is libel to say he thought Bill only held up three fingers, meaning to try and strike the guy out."

"Listen," says my friend, "you think Schalk and Killifer and them babies is brainy catchers and they are suppose to outguess the batter and etc. Well, our catchers has to outguess the pitchers, too. Like for inst. take Schalk. If he signs for a curve ball, why he can get ready to catch a curve ball. But if one of our catchers signs for a curve ball and the pitcher says all right, why he is just as libel as not to be kidding and the catcher has got to guess what he is going to throw and most of the time, when it comes it's a big surprise.

"A little uncertainty like that is what keeps us from going to sleep out there, as they's never no uncertainty in regards to who is going to win the game.

"But we have other excitement, like for inst. they's a big thrill every time we are in the field and somebody on the other club hits a fly ball. We know 2 or 3 of the boys is going to have a collision but we don't know which ones or whether they are going to get hurt or killed. So far they ain't none of them been killed, but the season ain't only about ½ over and this is no time to give up hope."

RING W. LARDNER.

Great Neck, July 15.

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"WELL, BILL SETS THERE ON THE BENCH AND YELLS AT THE PITCHERS AND HOLDS UP FOUR FINGERS."

"WE KNOW TWO OR THREE BOYS IS GOING TO HAVE A COLLISION."

A Famous Tree.

A DEAD giant of a tree stands in the grounds of the United States General Military Hospital at Washington—Walter Reed Hospital. The great branches of this tree have been sawed off—amputated might be the better word, bearing in mind the place where the tree stands—so that only the trunk and the butts of the big branches remain. It was a gaunt, dead tree when the hospital was established. It was a yellow poplar, and died a good many years ago from age and neglect. It was stripped of its bark long ago, and its bare wood is weathered to an ashen gray.

There is a tablet on the trunk of this tree which bears this legend: "Used as a signal station by Confederate soldiers under Gen. Early during the attack on Washington, July 11 and 12, 1864. Also occupied by sharpshooters."

When Gen. Jubal Early and his Confederate division won the battle of Monocacy and came down on Washington by marching twenty miles a day, and skirmishing a good part of the time, he drew up on the afternoon of July 11 at some distance from the north line of earth forts and rifle trenches which had been constructed all around Washington for the protection of the city.

This tree stood in an open field about 1,000 yards in front of Fort Stevens, on the rampart of which President Lincoln stood during a part of the fighting, having driven out to the fort from his summer residence in a cottage at the Soldiers' Home, about two miles nearer the city. The tree grew in land lower than the land around it, but from among its branches men could look out over the flat or gently rolling fields that stretched away to the par